Security Council

Fifty-third Year

Provisional

3900th Meeting

Tuesday, 30 June 1998, 3.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Amorim
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Biolley
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Essonghé
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab territories

Letter dated 23 June 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/558)

98-85552 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting resumed at 3.40 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 30 June 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, during the Council's discussion on the item entitled "The situation in the occupied Arab territories".

That letter will be published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/1998/592.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Lamani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to begin by extending to you, Mr. President, our sincere congratulations.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our condolences on the death of Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye, who lost his life as a martyr in the performance of his mission as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Angola, while carrying out his noble humanitarian effort.

I would also like to express our sincere appreciation for your response, Mr. President, and for the response of the other members of the Security Council, to the request made by the Arab Group to hold this emergency meeting to consider the serious decision, taken by the extremist Israeli Government on 21 June, to adopt the programme declared by the Israeli Prime Minister on 18 June aimed at strengthening Israel's illegitimate grip on Jerusalem. That provocative decision was intended to expand the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem to include Israeli settlements on the West Bank, to establish greater municipal authority and to annex more occupied Palestinian territories into the municipality of Jerusalem, thereby erasing the Arab character of the city and altering its status from a Holy City characterized by love and tolerance into a city that is totally within the Israeli grip. This would result in erasing its Arab identity and altering its demographic composition while Judaizing it totally.

While my country believes that this Israeli decision represents one aggression in a series of Israeli aggressions against Arab and Palestinian occupied territories, we strongly and categorically condemn and reject it. The Syrian Arab Republic regards that decision as not only a provocation of the Palestinian and Arab peoples, in particular, and of the peoples of the world, including Muslims and Christians, in general but also as a flagrant violation of international law and the resolutions of the Security Council, especially the 16 resolutions the Security Council has already adopted on Jerusalem. Security Council resolution 478 (1980) stresses in paragraph 3 that,

> "all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent 'basic law' on Jerusalem, are null and void".

This new Israeli decision is yet another flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and of the Hague Convention of 1907. The Syrian Arab Republic considers this new Israeli decision as null and void and of no legal consequence.

The new plan of the Israeli Prime Minister is within the framework of systematic procedures and steps aimed at destroying the peace process in its entirety. The decisions taken by the Israeli Government with regard to Jerusalem and its policies of annexing occupied Arab territories are the practical embodiment of the policies of "ethnic cleansing" that were strongly denounced and condemned by the international community with regard to Bosnia, for example. These measures taken by Israel remind us of the cantonization policy adopted by the racist regime of South Africa before the victory over apartheid.

The process of "ethnic cleansing" conducted by Israel against the Palestinian people has led millions of Palestinians to leave their homeland and, if this continues, will force scores of thousands more to go into

exile. Palestinians, who have always lived on the land of their forefathers, now hold only 0.5 per cent of their land; while the Israelis, who have brutally and through repression and mass massacres confiscated the land, control 99 per cent of all Palestinian land.

It is noteworthy that international warnings have been addressed to certain countries. Navies are being moved on the high seas and planes are being redeployed, while those who commit those actions do not bother to denounce in their statements or in a few words Israel's actions as being contradictory to human rights and to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions.

Scores of resolutions have been adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly to demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, cease the confiscation of land and refrain from taking any action that would alter the geographic, demographic and legal status of the occupied territories. However, Israel has treated those resolutions with total disregard. We believe that this raises the following questions.

Why are laws, resolutions and international sanctions made applicable to certain States but not to Israel? Why does Israel remain an outlaw? Why does it challenge and defy these laws and the Council?

In this context, since the Israeli Prime Minister took power he has taken the following actions in contradiction of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions: digging a tunnel next to the Al-Aqsa Mosque; establishing a new settlement in Jebel Abu Ghneim and planning for the construction of 6,500 housing units; undertaking archaeological excavations at Burj al-Laqlaq, within occupied East Jerusalem, as part of Israeli plans to build a settlement in the heart of occupied Jerusalem; providing protection to extremist settlers and support for their attempts to confiscate housing units such as those in Silwan, in East Jerusalem; confiscating additional occupied Arab lands in order to build settlements; making plans to build new settlements and encircling roads; demolishing Palestinian houses and withdrawing Palestinian identity cards; and persisting in not adhering to agreements, commitments and the destruction of the peace process. The list is very long.

This pattern of behaviour by the Israeli Government would lead us to say that the accumulation of oppression, injustice and tragedy to which the Palestinian people and the other Arab citizens in occupied Arab territories are subjected can only lead to an explosion endangering the security and stability of the whole region. It is unimaginable for those who live under occupation to accept it or to adapt and adjust themselves to the practices of the Israeli occupation.

The Israeli Prime Minister recently declared that his Government will continue to build settlements in every place in the Holy City, and reiterated his commitment to build the settlement in Jebel Abu Ghneim in defiance of international resolutions and calls of condemnation. The President of the Israeli Knesset associated himself with his Prime Minister by saying:

> "The appropriate Israeli response to the statement by the United States Secretary of State with regard to Jerusalem lies in the intensification of settler activities in the city and the implementation of Israeli designs without heed for any declarations or positions against it."

The policies of the extremist Israeli Government have led to a total paralysis of the peace process on all of its tracks. If it were not for the deceptive appearance of movement once in a while that does not deal with the matters of substance on the Palestinian track, during the last two years, the world would have seen the true picture in a tangible manner and would have realized that the Israeli Prime Minister has completely stopped the peace process from his first day in office, especially by having followed the policies of his ancestors in the expulsion of Arabs from their lands and bringing in new Jewish settlers from all over the world to replace them.

Nevertheless, the international community is about to discover the glaring truth, since the conflict between the extremists in the Israeli Government which was about only 2 per cent of the lands of the West Bank, has become a very explosive issue which may affect the American sponsor as well.

Syria will never give up one iota of its land, and will not permit regression from what has been achieved through previous negotiations. We will always insist on resuming the negotiations from the point where they stopped. In this regard, we would like to reiterate that strategic option of the Arabs for the establishment of a just and lasting peace is based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which all demand the complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, and

from southern Lebanon and the Bekaa to the recognized international boundaries. Moveover, Syria will always do its best to guarantee the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to the establishment of its independent State on its own soil.

The Israeli Government, by turning its back on its agreements, pledges and commitments reached during the peace process that started in Madrid in 1991, is solely responsible for destroying the peace process. While we appreciate the increasing international awareness of the reality of Israeli policies and their objectives, which are inimical to peace, we would like to urge the sponsors of the peace process, the countries of the European Union and friendly and peace-loving States, to continue their serious work in order to compel Israel to commit itself to the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and to fulfil the agreements, pledges and commitments which have been agreed upon as well as to resume the negotiations on both the Syrian and Lebanese tracks from the points at which they stopped.

In view of this bitter reality at which we have arrived through what is called the "Israeli political kitchen", and the misleading attempts of the head of the Israeli Government to justify its measures, the Security Council is now called upon to bear its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security by defending its credibility and its resolutions, by having Israel respect these resolutions, by condemning the Israeli decision to expand the geographic boundaries of Jerusalem and by compelling Israel to rescind this serious and provocative decision which, among other measures, represents another time bomb that would lead to an explosion of the whole region. The Security Council should also reiterate Israel's commitment to apply its relevant resolutions and those of the General Assembly, particularly resolution 446 (1979) to the effect of establishing an international commission of the Security Council to monitor and follow up the situation in order to prevent settler activities in Jerusalem and the Arab and Palestinian occupied territories.

At a time when we support the Palestinian people in order to guarantee their legitimate rights, we would like to urge the international community to provide all types of assistance and support to them.

In the light of the above, we look forward to the Security Council's taking a position on the side of the right and the just, a position of determination to protect international peace and security. The Security Council should adopt the necessary and mandatory measures and procedures that would prevent Israel from implementing its plan to expand the boundaries of Jerusalem, particularly since the Council is duty-bound to apply the provisions of the Charter with regard to giving effect to its resolutions without any double standard. Here we would like to recall these Security Council resolutions: 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980) and 476 (1980). We believe that a mere expression of concern or denunciation by this Council is no longer enough to have Israel change its aggressive decisions and settler and expansionist plans, either in the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, or in other Arab occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon.

The issue requires that the Security Council move effectively and decisively and take the necessary practical measures to rescind the decision and plan of the Israeli Government to expand the boundaries of Jerusalem and to bring pressure to bear on Israel in order for it to resume the talks on all tracks from the point where they stopped. In this regard, it is necessary to reaffirm the necessity of avoiding any double standard, especially with regard to the maintenance of peace and security, and most particularly when it comes to an issue such as Jerusalem. This is so especially because Israel's continuation of this extremist policy would lead to the destruction of the peace process and would endanger security and stability in the region.

The President: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his kind words addressed to me and members of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of Yemen. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): As this is the last meeting to be held under your presidency, Sir, I should like sincerely to congratulate you on the remarkable manner in which you have presided over the Council's work this month. At the outset, I also wish to thank you for having convened this special meeting to address the situation in Jerusalem, despite the reluctance and opposition of some.

Jerusalem is the symbol of the Arab-Israeli conflict and is at the heart of the Palestinian question. It will remain so until comprehensive peace is reestablished in

the Middle East, including in the Holy City. On 21 June, the Israeli Government, the occupying Power, took the very serious decision to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, to undertake new construction projects, to include Israeli settlements and to annex significant territories of the West Bank to Jerusalem. This is a clear attempt to efface the character of the city, alter its demography to create a Jewish majority, do away with its Arab identity, and destroy the legal and natural status of Jerusalem, a city that belongs to all three monotheistic religions.

My Government strongly condemns this decision of the Israeli Government, which blatantly violates the Madrid peace framework, all relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and challenges international legitimacy. The Security Council has adopted 16 resolutions on Jerusalem and repeatedly affirmed that any legislative or administrative measure taken by Israel to alter the legal status and the demographic composition of the city is null and void. The Council has also affirmed that the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 is applicable to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.

My delegation invites the Security Council, the organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, to fulfil its obligations and duties under the Charter by adopting practical and tangible measures to prevent Israel from repeatedly violating the Council's resolutions. The Council should enact urgent and expeditious measures to prevent the Israeli Government from implementing its decision on Jerusalem and its settlement policy.

Ever since the extremist Government in Israel came to power, it has relentlessly sought, in all seriousness and enthusiasm, to distance itself from the Oslo accords and to undermine and impede the peace process. All of this has taken place at a time when opportunities to establish peace have arisen. The Palestinian Authority has demonstrated its adherence to the peace process by discharging its responsibilities vis-à-vis that process. We urge this Council to reassume its role in accordance with resolution 242 (1967), the essential basis for achieving a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East.

The President: I thank the representative of Yemen for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Lebanon. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased to begin my statement today by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. The work of the Council has been conducted with efficiency and skill under your presidency.

I am also pleased to extend to Ambassador Mahugu, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, our appreciation for his work last month.

Today, the Security Council is again addressing a topic of great importance to the future of peace in the Middle East: the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in holy Jerusalem. This city has a special status, the uniqueness of which is represented by the spiritual heritage of the followers of all three revealed religions and the deep religious feelings associated with it, particularly in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

We have spoken on this topic in the Council on a number of occasions in recent years and we do so again today in the wake of the adoption by the Israeli Government, on 21 June 1998, of a programme announced by the Prime Minister, which aims at strengthening Israel's illegal hold on Jerusalem. The plan would expand the boundaries of Jerusalem and would extend the municipal authority so as to include some Jewish settlements in the West Bank, establishing a so-called "umbrella authority". This is a concrete step towards the illegal annexation of more occupied Palestinian land to the already illegally expanded Jerusalem municipality.

With the convening of the Madrid Conference in 1991 and the establishment of the foundations and principles of the peace process, we had hoped that a new dawn had broken over the region in which just, lasting and permanent peace would prevail. But Israel's expansionist settler policy and confiscation of territories dealt a blow to these hopes, which the new Israeli Government has all but extinguished. It has openly reneged on the commitments on which the peace process is based, made settlement an integral part of its political priorities, and adopted new and dangerous measures to annex East Jerusalem. Thus, once again and for the fourth time in two years, we return to the Security

Council to focus our attention on Israel's illegal measures and practices in occupied East Jerusalem, aimed at consolidating its attempts to alter the legal status and demographic composition of that city.

Last year the Israeli Government began building a new settlement that includes 6,500 housing units at Jebel Abu Ghneim. Today it is trying to expand the area of settlement. That is being done in the context of a series of similar measures taken by Israel, including its declared intention to build another settlement at Ras Al-Amud, within the original borders of East Jerusalem, in the wake of its demolition of buildings at Burj al-Laqlaq in order to establish yet another settlement in their place. All of this is the prelude to another campaign aimed at reducing the Arab and Palestinian population of Jerusalem. We have always warned that these policies and illegal measures to expand Jerusalem are extremely dangerous.

The Israeli authorities are still holding to the new tunnel that was built under Al-Haram Al-Sharif, despite Security Council resolution 1073 (1996). The Security Council has so far adopted 16 resolutions on Jerusalem, and has repeatedly announced that all measures and arrangements adopted by Israel, the occupying Power, including those legislative and administrative arrangements that aim to change the legal status and demographic composition and character of the city, are null and void and without any legal validity. Moreover, the Security Council has repeatedly declared that the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 applies to all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem.

Given this context, we should like to affirm the following principles. First, we express our full solidarity with the Palestinian people, who refuse to submit to the occupation, no matter how powerful that occupation may be. Secondly, the settlement and expansionist measures, justified by the Israelis on the pretext of security, which has brought numerous Israeli Governments to power, have proved to be a failure. Those measures have led to an escalation of violence and an increase in tension between the Arabs and the Israelis. What peace can be established as long as occupation continues? A peace that is a *fait accompli* imposed by force cannot survive, and is doomed to ignominious failure.

Thirdly, the current problem is not an emergency; it is the result of basic Israeli mentality and policy. To deal with that problem we therefore need the international community, as represented by this Council, to take a clear position reaffirming to the Israeli Government its rejection of the annexation of the occupied Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, and its policy of settlement in other occupied Arab territories.

East Jerusalem, like other towns and villages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, are territories that were seized by force by Israel in 1967. Occupation will not bestow any legitimacy with the passage of time. The provisions of international law state that those territories, which were acquired by force, must be evacuated. The international community should never recognize that occupation.

Those Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, are subject to the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Therefore Israel, as the occupying Power, must not make any changes in these territories. The Security Council has adopted a long list of resolutions, all of which demand that Israel respect its commitments and obligations as the occupying Power. The most important of these is resolution 478 (1980), which determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recently "basic law" on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith.

We hope that the Security Council will oppose the threats posed to Jerusalem by the Israeli Government's actions and violations of international law and by the blockade it has imposed on that Holy City, in addition to the demolition of houses, the confiscation of identity cards and the building of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Security Council, which is responsible for international peace and security, must adopt specific, concrete measures to stop the Israeli plan to expand the borders of Jerusalem and any other Israeli violations of international law and of Security Council resolutions.

In issuing this call we are working honestly and sincerely for the future of peace in the region. Adopting a relaxed attitude towards Israeli leaders has brought only violence and destruction for Arabs and Israelis alike. Our position is in conformity with the previous resolutions of the Council and all resolutions of international legitimacy. It is also in conformity with the high precepts of

international law, which remains the cornerstone of today's civilized world.

We believe that it is the duty of the Council to work for the implementation of the provisions of the Charter and the resolutions that it has adopted in other regions of the world as well as in the Middle East on the basis of one and the same standard. We should not forget Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971) and 476 (1980), which all considered the legislative and administrative measures as well as other actions adopted by Israel in Jerusalem to be null and void.

We call for a resolution that will clearly express the international community's rejection of and opposition to Israel's policy and its measures to annex the occupied territories or expand the settlements. We would like such a resolution to include specific measures to commit Israel to act in conformity with international legitimacy. Time is not on the side of peace. There is a sense of foreboding, of an evil that might spill over and that may not be confined to the region.

Respect for previous Security Council resolutions on Jerusalem must remain one of the main requisites for the achievement of peace in the Middle East. If the Council were to turn a blind eye to such Israeli actions, it would call into question the credibility of the Council's criteria and standards which the Council applies in dealing with various questions. Real peace is at hand, provided that we work for it on the bases that we all agreed together in Madrid. The most important of these are land for peace and the full implementation of international legitimacy. This requires Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem and the Golan, to the lines of 4 June 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as resolution 425 (1978), which calls for strict respect by Israel for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders.

It also calls upon Israel to stop its military action against the territorial integrity of Lebanon immediately and to withdraw its troops from all Lebanese territory.

We call upon the cosponsors of the peace process and the international community to continue to bring pressure to bear on Israel to implement the pledges and commitments it has entered into and to resume negotiations on both the Lebanese and Syrian tracks from the point where they stopped. The incomplete measures that have been taken within the peace process should not free Israel from the pressure of public opinion and of the international community and should not allow it to continue its massive settlement activities.

The President: I thank the representative of Lebanon for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ka (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on the outstanding manner in which you have handled all of the important matters before the Security Council and on the excellent work you have accomplished since the beginning of your term. I should like also to congratulate your predecessor, my brother and friend Mr. Mahugu, Permanent Representative of Kenya, on his timely initiatives and on the significant achievements he recorded during his presidency of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting once again today to consider the serious situation that has resulted from the recent actions of the Israeli Government. In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to express the firm condemnation of our Committee of the illegal decision taken by the occupying Power to extend the borders of the municipality of Jerusalem, thereby consecrating, through unacceptable administrative and legal ploys, its authority over territories that do not belong to it.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people has consistently drawn the attention of the General Assembly and the Security Council not only to the massive and repeated violations on the part of the occupying Power of the relevant resolutions of the Assembly and the Council, but also to the numerous obstacles that Israel has set up to impede the peace process, which had given us all so much hope.

The question of Jerusalem is at the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and any unilateral attempt to alter the status of the Holy City, its demographic composition

and its geographic and institutional structure represents a grave violation and a threat to the security and stability of the region.

The Government of the occupying Power, through the policy of *fait accompli*, has set about modifying unilaterally and in violation of international law the religious, cultural and historical characteristics as well as the Arabic, Islamic and Christian identity of Jerusalem. It will stop at nothing to achieve its objective of Judaizing Jerusalem. It has resorted to the destruction of houses; the confiscation of land; the illegal extension of settlements, particularly in East Jerusalem; the encircling and isolation of the Holy City by armed settlers; and the confiscation and destruction of the identity papers of Palestinians citizens, who have been expelled from their own city.

Indeed, for more than 18 months, a silent deportation of Palestinians from East Jerusalem has been taking place before our eyes. Hundreds of people are being expelled from their land with the precise objective of preserving a permanent and uncontested majority of Jews in the city. Let us not forget that these expelled Palestinians are not immigrants. They were born in Jerusalem, and their houses and families are in Jerusalem. Their fundamental rights can never be disregarded.

Other provocations include the sealing off of territories, torture, punitive expeditions, administrative detention, and the violation of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinians.

The recent adoption of a quota system as part of a plan concerning Jerusalem aims to ensure that by the year 2020 Jews will constitute 70 per cent of the population of Jerusalem and Arabs only 30 per cent. Such unilateral decisions represent not only a provocation for the Palestinian people but also major setbacks in the peace process, which has been on hold for more than a year.

Our Committee strongly denounces that decision, which is a clear violation of international law, of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the relevant Security Council resolutions. That decision by the Israeli authorities also violates the letter and spirit of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, particularly those adopted during the tenth emergency special session.

The United Nations and several intergovernmental organizations have repeatedly reaffirmed the special status of Jerusalem as well as their position that Israel's occupation is illegal and its actions therefore null and void under international law.

The recent Israeli decision concerning greater Jerusalem represents, in our view, a fresh example of such illegal measures. The establishment and expansion of settlements, the isolation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank, the measures taken against Palestinian residency status, and the archaeological excavations are all ongoing sources of concern to the international community.

Our Committee is deeply concerned at the non-respect by the occupying Power of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including the 16 resolutions adopted by the Council on the city of Jerusalem. The Committee considers that the decisions taken by the occupying Power regarding the Holy City of Jerusalem are null and void. The Committee therefore joins its voice to those of the States Members of the United Nations in inviting the Israeli Government to reconsider its decision and to put an end to the policy of *fait accompli* with respect to the Holy City, whose future must be determined solely within the framework of the final status negotiations.

The Committee launches an urgent appeal to the authorities of the occupying Power to renounce the measures already taken or envisaged to change the geographic, demographic, religious and institutional characteristics of the city of Jerusalem, as well as of the other Arab territories occupied since 1967.

The Committee, through me, would lastly like to call on the Israeli Government to commit itself to the implementation of the agreements already concluded with the Palestinian Authority in order to create the necessary conditions for the resumption of the peace process and the full and effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

It must be recalled that Jerusalem belongs to both the Palestinians and the Israelis, to Muslims, to Christians and to Jews. That city is a mosaic of all cultures, of all religions and of all the peoples that have enriched Jerusalem from time immemorial up to this day. Jerusalem must remain the city of peace, made up of present and future emotions, dreams and realities. It must be the birthplace of love and coexistence between all peoples and their beliefs.

Finally, allow me to express our deep gratitude to all the members of the Council for having made the decision to convene this open meeting on such an important and delicate matter. In so doing, the Security Council remains loyal to its calling and to the role entrusted to it by the United Nations.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People hopes that at the conclusion of this debate, the Security Council will demonstrate to international public opinion its willingness to contribute to making this sensitive region of the world a zone of peace and cooperation. It hopes, lastly, that the Council will take timely measures, with the support of the sponsors of the peace process, to put an end to the unilateral decisions concerning control over the Holy City of Jerusalem, which, I reiterate, must remain the living symbol of peaceful coexistence between religions and peoples that are different yet complementary.

The President: I thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his kind words addressed to me, to my predecessor and to other members of the Security Council.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abu-Nimah(Jordan)(*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your outstanding presidency. I would also like to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, for having presided over the Council's endeavours with his usual wisdom.

I also wish to express my condolences on the untimely passing of Maître Alioune Blondin Beye, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General who died in the exercise of his functions.

I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this meeting to discuss a most important matter: the decision of the Israeli Government to expand the city of Jerusalem towards the occupied Arab territories to the north, west and south. This is an illegal decision in contravention of various resolutions of the General Assembly and of this Council, in particular those resolutions that reject Israel's decision to annex the Arab part of Jerusalem. That decision also contravenes the 1993 agreements that deferred the question of the status of Jerusalem to the final stage of the negotiations, and in accordance with those agreements, the status of Jerusalem was to remain unchanged until agreement was reached at the final stage of the negotiations.

That decision also runs counter to the 1949 Geneva Convention and all international laws that guarantee protection for persons under occupation and their property. We call upon the Council to reaffirm its refusal to accept these changes, to reaffirm its early resolutions in connection with Jerusalem and to demand that Israel respect and implement them, as it does of other States. We are pleased that preceding speakers have confirmed this position.

The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has firmly opposed and condemned Israel's decision. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs stated on 22 June 1998, that Jordan categorically rejects this decision and considers it null and void. He added that any attempts to whitewash the decision taken by Mr. Netanyahu are unacceptable and would fail to convince anyone.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan has also called on all international Powers to convince Israel that its action are null and void and that it is destructive to the peace process and all that was achieved by other leaders who made the ultimate sacrifice for peace and for the well-being of future generations.

In this regard, the Jordanian House of Representatives adopted a decision on 23 June condemning the Israeli decision on Jerusalem and describing it as one more link in the chain of flagrant violations of resolutions on Jerusalem and the policy of annexing Arab territory. This reflects Israel's defiance of resolutions of international legitimacy and the harm it does to hundreds of millions of Arabs and Muslims.

Furthermore, our Government repeated its condemnation of and indignation at all Israeli attempts to alter the Arab character of Jerusalem, particularly the plan to expand the city. The Islamic and Arab Ummah was also called on to oppose this desecration of their sacred rights. All international organizations and peace- and justice-loving countries have been called on to oppose this decision by all means, because the Israeli decision will have the most harmful consequences for the peace process now and in the future.

This Israeli decision links the chain of illegal measures adopted by Israel and brought to the attention of the Council, particularly the opening of the tunnel near a number of sacred Islamic sites, which led to bloody and tragic events, and the building in Jebel Abu Ghneim of Israeli settlements, a decision that was opposed by the entire international community and all Arab States and that brought the peace process to a halt.

The Israeli decision was also condemned by the General Assembly. We warned against the dangers of Israeli policies that destroy the foundations of peace. We said that the destruction of homes, the expulsion of inhabitants from Burj al-Laqlaq, the confiscation of the identity cards of the original settlers of Jerusalem, the confiscation of Arab land, the sealing off of the city of Jerusalem to prevent Arabs from going there for medical treatment, study or religious services, the ongoing isolation of Palestinian cities, the thwarting of freedom of movement and the expansion of settlement colonies are all inherently dangerous acts. They widen the gap of acrimony, deepen the feelings of despair and frustration and therefore constitute a threat to security.

It is clear that Israel, in its decision to expand the city of Jerusalem, aims at creating an opportunity to Judaize the city and strengthen its hold on it. In fact, the Prime Minister of Israel candidly declared that the objective of that plan was to keep the Arab population under 30 per cent. It is also clear that Israel plans to expand its settlement projects in Arab territories at the expense of the legitimate inhabitants, and to create new facts on the ground prior to the final stage of negotiations. This is a path strewn with dangers.

Though we continuously reiterate our rejection of violence as a means of settling disputes, we believe that the measures adopted by the Israeli Government are a means *par excellence* of sowing the seeds of violence and terrorism. Therefore, from this rostrum, we call upon the Israeli Government to reconsider policies which consolidate the gains of force and war, to undertake the implementation of agreements and to accept the bases we have all agreed to as foundations for peace. It was that peace which we began together at Madrid, in a blessed initiative, through which major progress has been achieved.

However, Israel has opted for closing this path, and has refused counsel even from its closest friends and allies. We in the Middle East are confronting major dangers. We must close ranks in order to avoid the negative consequences of such acts. The continuation of these illegal acts of aggression against the simplest yet the most sacred of people's rights, against their properties, their hopes and their future, we will not allow us to expect anything but the abyss of violence, conflict and hatred. In Jordan, this is not the option we chose, and it will never be.

The President: I thank the representative of Jordan for his kind words addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to express my appreciation for your efforts. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Kenya, for his role in presiding over the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting for the third time in a little over a year to consider the situation in the occupied Arab territories, particularly in the Holy City of Jerusalem, where on 21 June the Israeli Cabinet adopted a decision that would expand the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem to include some of the adjacent settlements and large areas of the West Bank. This new Israeli decision is one of the most dangerous Israel has adopted with regard to the Holy City. It represents a step in a programme that is perfectly clear to all and that aims to achieve several objectives. Among these objectives are the annexation of more Palestinian territory to the municipality of Jerusalem, whose authority was previously expanded illegally, the alteration of the demographic composition of the city, the obliteration of its character, and the change of its status as the Holy City for all revealed religions, as well as the eradication of its Arab identity.

The new Israeli decision and the plan that it implies represent not only a provocation of the Palestinian people, its will and its leadership, but also a challenge to the will of the international community and a clear violation of international law and legitimacy. As we all know, this is in complete contradiction of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It also repudiates the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, particularly the more than 16 relevant resolutions of the Security

Council regarding the city of Jerusalem, including in particular resolution 252 (1968). That resolution provides that all measures and actions adopted by Israel with regard to Jerusalem are null and void.

This is not the first measure on Jerusalem adopted by Israel. Rather, it is but a step in a long series of measures and illegal actions that aim to change the facts on the ground in favour of Israel. These include the building of settlements such as the one at Jebel Abu Ghneim — an issue on which this Council could not come to a decision but which is still being considered by the emergency special session of the General Assembly. This is in addition to other measures that aim to tighten the grip, economically and socially, on the Palestinian people.

In spite of repeated calls from the international community, Israel persists in challenging the will of the international community by refusing to implement the commitments and pledges that it assumed in the framework of the peace process and of other concluded agreements. Among these is the agreement to consider the status of Jerusalem in the final stage of the peace process and the agreement not to adopt, in the interim, any measures that would change the existing situation.

What is needed today is for the Council to adopt firm measures to prevail upon Israel to rescind its decision. That would represent a positive step in the efforts to give impetus to the peace process. This is what Tunisia has been working for: the establishment of a permanent and just peace in the Middle East, in order to give substance to the principle of land for peace and in a manner that would guarantee the Palestinian people's right to establish their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of the other Arab peoples concerned to have their lands restored to them.

The whole world is looking to the Council today to see what urgent measures can be adopted in this direction to affirm its credibility, maintain its prestige and safeguard the aspirations for peace and security in the Middle East.

The President: I thank the representative of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Bangladesh. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): My delegation would first of all like to convey to you, Sir, as you conclude your responsibilities as President of the Council, our deep and sincere appreciation for the able and effective manner in which you have conducted the business of the Council during the very heavily loaded month of June.

Bangladesh would like to join others in thanking the Security Council for the timely convening of this meeting to consider the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

Much work still needs to be done — notwithstanding so many resolutions, United Nations sessions and international conferences — to bring about a just solution to the Palestine question and to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East. We fully share the concern expressed by the representative of the Sudan in his letter to the President of the Security Council in document S/1998/558, dated 23 June 1998, transmitted in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group, regarding the decision of the Israeli Government to expand the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem and to create a "municipal umbrella" that would include a number of Jewish settlements on the West Bank.

The situation in the occupied territories is a matter of grave concern to the international community. A single country's continued defiance of international law and all United Nations resolutions and the systematic violations of human rights in the occupied territories are indeed unfortunate. The United Nations has stressed the need to preserve the territorial integrity of all occupied territories and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods in the territories, including the removal of restrictions into and from East Jerusalem and freedom of movement to and from the outside world.

The United Nations has also demanded immediate and full cessation of construction in all Israeli settlement activities, as well as of all illegal measures and actions in Jerusalem. To our utter disappointment, Israel has not only paid scant attention to the demands of the international community, but has continued its illegal measures and actions that violate the territorial integrity of the occupied territories and impose restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods.

It is all the more regrettable that recently the Israeli Government approved a programme to strengthen Israel's illegal hold on Jerusalem. This programme, if implemented, would expand the border of Jerusalem and extend the municipal authority over some Jewish settlements in the West Bank under the "municipal umbrella".

This is unacceptable. Bangladesh calls upon the Security Council and the international community to have Israel refrain from this gross violation of international law and the relevant resolutions on Jerusalem adopted by this body. We reiterate our full support for the decisions of the United Nations with regard to the legal status, demographic composition and character of Jerusalem.

Israeli settlements in the occupied territories have always been a source of tension, as these settlements violate the land rights of the people under occupation. Unfortunately, Israel, in defiance of United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolutions ES-10/2, ES-10/3 and ES-10/4, continues to pursue repressive policies in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. These resolutions demand immediate and full cessation of construction in Jebel Abu Ghneim and of all other Israeli settlement activities, as well as of all illegal measures and actions in Jerusalem. The resolutions also underline the obligation of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention to ensure respect of the Convention by Israel.

Bangladesh is concerned at Israel's flagrant violation of human rights and its imposition of the instrument of oppression against the Palestinian people under the pretext of security considerations. Retaliation for individual offences is taking the form of collective punishment, such as blockading, demolition of houses, confiscation of property, deportation and the conduct of collective searches. Bangladesh is watching with concern the developments regarding the systematic campaign being carried out by Israel to demoralize the people of the occupied territories, particularly the Palestinians, with a view to perpetuating its illegal occupation under various pretexts.

Bangladesh is committed, by its Constitution, to supporting oppressed peoples throughout the world. Thus, we have consistently expressed our strong solidarity with our Palestinian brethren, always and everywhere, particularly at the United Nations and in all of the major international forums. My delegation would like to stress the need for full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which form the basis of the Middle East Peace process, and the need for immediate and scrupulous implementation of the agreements reached between the parties, including the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and the commencement of the negotiations on the final settlement.

Bangladesh calls upon the international community to re-inject momentum into the peace process and to deploy all the necessary efforts and initiatives to bring the peace process back on track and to ensure its continuity and success.

We believe that it is absolutely necessary to end all illegal measures and actions by Israel in the interest of restoring mutual confidence and promoting peace. It cannot be over-emphasized that the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict will constitute a significant contribution to strengthening international peace, security and progress. We call upon all concerned to ensure that the peace accords are complied with fully and negotiations with the Palestinian Authority are pursued in a congenial atmosphere.

We believe that the peace process can be effectively advanced by the withdrawal of all troops from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, stopping settlement in those areas with immediate effect and allowing the Palestinian diaspora to return to their homeland.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the United Nations has an abiding responsibility in resolving the problems arising from the illegal occupation by Israel, as foreign occupation in itself constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. The people of Palestine are seeking protection under international law and the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. Bangladesh expresses total solidarity with them.

The President: I thank the representative of Bangladesh for his warm remarks addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Al-Ahmed (Saudi Arabia)(*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the Council presidency for this month, and I wish you full success in the performance of your duties. I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor for the great role he played as the President of the Security Council last month.

If the Palestinian problem represents the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict, then the issue of Holy Jerusalem is

at the heart of that problem and is the pivotal element for dealing with the peace process depends on it. The future of the peace process depends on it.

We are gravely concerned to see how the Israeli authorities continue to take actions and measures with the intention of altering Holy Jerusalem's demographic and structural character and attempting to change its Arab character and to Judaize the city and its legal, historical, religious and cultural reality.

This is a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1907. These acts and measures also adversely influence the negotiations on the future of Jerusalem, which are supposed to take place when the final status of the city is addressed.

The Holy City of Jerusalem is of the utmost importance to the Arab and Muslim worlds, as well as to the world community and the three monotheistic religions in general. That is why the illegal Israeli policies and practices in Jerusalem are highly dangerous.

The Israeli Government's approval of the plan to expand the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem and its jurisdiction is designed to strengthen Israel's grip on the city and the neighbouring areas and to isolate the city from the rest of the West Bank in a series of illegal policies and acts, notwithstanding the fact that the international community and the Security Council have issued clear resolutions declaring such policies illegal, null and void. In addition, the international community has demanded that Israel desist from such policies and practices. Despite all these clear signals, the Israeli authorities continue their dangerous practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, disregarding every convention and recognizing no right, as if no deterrent could make them revert to observing legal norms.

Some of the most continually destabilizing factors in the occupied territories are manifest in the Israeli Government's pursuit of its provocative policies and practices in violation of international law and legal resolutions. One can only imagine how dangerous this would be within Holy Jerusalem. The city is the first *kiblah* and the third-holiest place for Muslims, and the center of Muslims' attention. They will not be satisfied until all their rights are restored to them in this Holy City. The announcement by the Israeli Government that it intends to tighten its illegal control of the city of Jerusalem, despite all Arab, Islamic and international warnings, constitutes a new challenge to the international community and will negatively affect the peace process and the future of peace and stability in the region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirms that no lasting peace will be achieved in the Middle East without a just solution to the issue of the Holy City of Jerusalem in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which demand Israel's withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967, and resolution 252 (1968), which deals with Jerusalem. Accordingly, the future of the Middle East and peace in that region are in the hands of the international community. Unless the international community moves to save this peace by demanding that Israel cease its settlement practices and policies in the city of Jerusalem, the peace process in the Middle East and the integrity of the agreements already signed between parties to the conflict will be seriously threatened, since this behaviour affects the most important issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As we express our grave concern over this decision, we affirm that the Israeli plan to expand the boundaries of the municipality of the Holy City of Jerusalem will shatter the peace process and may be the straw that breaks the back of peace, because the West Bank is not outside the city of Jerusalem. Thus, the expansion of Jerusalem eastward, westward, northward or southward — or even skyward and underground — is still unacceptable, contravenes international treaties and resolutions, and will not be accepted by the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques considers that the decision of the current Israeli Government to expand the boundaries of the municipality of Jerusalem is illegal and constitutes a dangerous violation of international conventions and agreements. This decision reaffirms the continuation of the Israeli Government's plans to Judaize the city of Jerusalem and efface its Arab and Islamic character. Saudi Arabia also believes that such policies and practices contribute to increasing tension and undermine the credibility of and confidence in the Israeli Government in the context of the peace process.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, denounces and rejects Israel's ongoing irresponsible behaviour in one of the most delicate and sensitive aspects of the peace process. We also emphasize the extreme gravity of this decision and ask the Security Council to make every effort necessary to ensure that Israel, as the occupying

Power, will desist from these policies and practices, and in particular will completely halt all settlement activity in Arab Jerusalem. Failure to achieve this will plunge the region back into a spiral of conflict, tension and instability.

We reiterate our belief that the Security Council, as the organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, is obligated to take the necessary concrete measures to stop the Israeli violations in the Holy City of Jerusalem. Israeli violations of international law and the resolutions of the Security Council must cease forthwith.

We are hopeful that the Security Council will assume its responsibilities with regard to the Holy City of Jerusalem so as to prove to the entire world that it is on the side of right.

The President: I thank the representative of Saudi Arabia for the kind words he addressed to me and my predecessor.

The next speaker is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hamdoon (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I should also like to congratulate you on the utmost efficiency with which you have conducted the work of the Council.

We welcome the convening of this meeting to discuss a situation that seriously threatens international peace and security: the question of Jerusalem and Palestine. Israel's measures to Judaize Jerusalem and to efface its Arab identity fall within its expansionist plan aimed at acquiring Arab territories by force. Jerusalem, in particular, has a special religious and historical significance, not only for Arabs and Palestinians, but for the Islamic and Christian worlds as a whole.

It is where the prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven, and it is the cradle of Christianity. Therefore, trying in any way to alter its identity, legal status or demographic composition represents a clear challenge to the feelings of those in both the Islamic and Christian worlds, in addition to being a clear violation of Security Council resolutions.

The international community calls upon the Security Council, which bears responsibility under the Charter, to pay sufficient attention to that issue and give it due importance and to adopt as soon as possible measures to stop the Judaization of that Holy City.

The Security Council must face a fact that can no longer be denied or ignored: since 1990 its practices have been characterized — even pervaded — by selectivity of criteria, double standards and the use of the machinery of the Council for narrow self-interest. A clear example is the way in which the Council deals with the Palestinian question in general and the issue of Jerusalem in particular. We have been and are still being told by a permanent member of the Council that the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict have no place on the agenda of the Council. That country has matched words with deeds, and during the past few years has prevented the Council from examining the question of Palestine and Jerusalem. When the Council has considered that question in the past, that country has used the veto to abort the adoption of any serious measure by the Council. Yet we all know that there is nothing more dangerous to international peace and security than the expansionist policy of Israel, coupled with its possession of all weapons of mass destruction, including more than 200 nuclear warheads.

It is a painful irony that the representative of that permanent member of the Council has in the past week insisted on refusing to allow the Council to consider the question of Jerusalem, while at the same time insisting that it discuss press allegations that there has been a lack of compliance by Iraq with Security Council resolution 833 (1993). That representative also insisted that the Council discuss, and the President of the Council ask the Ambassador of Iraq to explain, an Iraqi letter responding to press statements made by the assistant of the Secretary of State that represented a clear interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and a provocation and incitement to overthrow its Government.

The international community expressed anger and condemnation over the Israeli decision on 21 June 1998 to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, a decision that represents a tangible violation of Security Council resolutions. It also represents a clear contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. In responding to the wish of the international community, the Council should therefore adopt a resolution condemning the Israeli laws and the process of confiscating occupied Arab territories and should force the occupying Power to stop all of its programmes and

plans for building settlements and to demolish those settlements that have already been established.

If the Council prevaricates over adopting a just resolution to deter the aggressor, it will only lead to a further weakening of its credibility — and its credibility is already in a pitiful state right now. It would also lead to the immeasurable deterioration of the fragile situation in the area and thereby severely jeopardize international peace and security.

The President: I thank the representative of Iraq for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Kuwait. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express our appreciation for your remarkable efforts, Mr. President, in conducting the Council's business for this month, which has been fraught with meetings and discussions on many different important issues relating directly to international peace and security. I also wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of Ambassador Mahugu for his successful conduct of the Council's business and wise guidance of its affairs last month.

The Council is meeting today to consider a grave and important issue that is endangering peace and security in the region of the Middle East: the issue of occupied Jerusalem, which is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have already adopted many resolutions on this important and delicate issue. Regrettably, those resolutions have not been implemented or even respected by Israel, the occupying Power. Successive Israeli Governments have not only ignored the international legally binding resolutions, disregarding them completely, but have challenged the resolutions and adopted provocative policies aimed at perpetuating their occupation of the Arab territories in general and of the city of Jerusalem in particular, in an attempt to erase its identity and change its demographic nature and status as a Holy City for the monotheistic religions.

The most recent decision, taken by the Israeli Government on 21 June and aimed at expanding the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem to include the settlements surrounding the city and vast areas of land in the West Bank, is yet further testimony of Israel's persistence in violating and breaching international legally binding resolutions and of its total disregard for and lack of commitment to the bilateral agreements signed with the Palestinian Authority within the framework of the peace process.

For two years the peace process has been in a state of paralysis, if not regression. There have been doubts and fears that it might not be possible to continue the process and to preserve the few gains that have been made since it was launched in Madrid in 1991. The current Israeli Government has left no room for doubt that its practices and policies will lead to a failure of the peace process and a return to an atmosphere of tension and instability in the region.

Optimism is gradually fading, replaced by disappointment at the diminishing possibility of establishing a just and lasting peace. A lack of confidence prevails among the parties most concerned with the peace process. The international community should take a stand that would deter the Israeli Government and require it to put an end to these policies and practices, in order to revitalize the peace process through a reaffirmation of its commitment to the framework of the Madrid Conference based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

In this context, and proceeding from our keen interest in the success of the peace process and the need to support and maintain it, we would like to reaffirm the following points.

First, Kuwait strongly condemns the decision by the Israeli Government to expand the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem, as this is a clear and explicit violation of internationally binding resolutions and in particular resolution 252 (1968), which considers any acts taken by Israel with regard to Jerusalem as null and void. We demand that Israel reverse that decision and desist from its policies aimed at the Judaization of the city.

Secondly, we demand that Israel, the occupying Power, recommit itself to abiding by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and apply those provisions to all the territories it has been occupying since 1967, including Jerusalem.

Thirdly, we demand that Israel desist from carrying out any illegal measures or settlement activities that are

aimed only at imposing a *fait accompli*, and we demand also that it abide by the agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority with regard to these issues, which should be considered within the framework of the final status negotiations.

Fourthly, Kuwait fully supports the Palestinian people and their inalienable and legitimate right to establish their own independent State on their own land, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Fifthly, we would like to reaffirm the importance of giving momentum to the peace process on all tracks, in particular the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, and to stand firm in the face of Israeli intransigence, which seeks to achieve security without giving up land.

Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), is the only guarantee of peace and security for all the countries of the region.

In conclusion, we would like to call upon the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to uphold its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and to stand firm in the face of Israeli policies and practices in order to compel the Israeli Government to respect internationally binding resolutions and to abide by the bilateral agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority within the framework of the peace process.

We would like also to call upon the sponsors of the peace process — the Russian Federation and the United States of America in particular — to redouble their efforts to revitalize the peace process and avoid the possibility of its failure in a manner that would achieve a just and lasting peace in the region, leading to a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan, southern Lebanon and its western areas, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The President: I thank the representative of Kuwait for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Oman. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Sameen (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like at the outset to convey to you, Sir, my most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Without a doubt, your diplomatic skills and your wisdom augur well for the success of the Council's deliberations. I should like also to congratulate Ambassador Mahugu for the remarkable manner in which he steered the work of the Council last month, with the assistance of his colleagues.

The Council is meeting today to consider a very serious and important question. Indeed, the decision on 21 June by the Israeli Council of Ministers to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem to include the neighbouring settlements and the West Bank, the destruction of houses and the expulsion of inhabitants represent escalating measures aimed at enabling the Israeli Government to strengthen its hold over the Holy City of Jerusalem, thereby jeopardizing the final phase of the negotiations.

In view of the special and sensitive status of Jerusalem and its status in the three major religions, the Security Council has adopted 16 resolutions on behalf of the international community. Through these resolutions, it has reaffirmed that all measures and arrangements taken by Israel as the occupying Power, including illegal administrative decisions and arrangements, to alter the legal status and demographic composition of the city are null and void and without any legal validity.

Moreover, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 is applicable to all territories occupied by Israel in 1967, including Jerusalem. The Hague Convention of 1907 also applies to all those territories, including Jerusalem.

The measures taken by the Israeli Government to expand the municipal boundaries of the city of Jerusalem and to expand the "municipal umbrella" to include certain Jewish settlements in the West Bank represent a flagrant violation of the principles underlying the peace process and of internationally binding resolutions. These measures jeopardize the tireless peace efforts that have been deployed over the past decade and risk igniting an infernal cycle of conflict and instability.

Since Madrid, the peace process has registered major achievements.

The Arab world has long viewed the peace process as a strategic option and has worked sincerely to

implement the process. From the very outset, my country has chosen that option because it is convinced that peace is imperative for all the peoples and States of the region, including Israel.

We are profoundly disturbed to see the peace process threatened in this way owing to Israel's lack of respect for agreed principles and for peace agreements. This is not Israel's first violation of the peace process: it has continued to pursue its settlements policy and has not fulfilled commitments it entered into. Israel's failure to fulfil its commitments and its continued pursuit of the settlement policy have deadlocked the peace process. The present impasse is a direct result of these arrogant policies. The latest decision by Israel is but one in a long series of violations. Yet the road to peace is clearly and unequivocally marked.

My country calls upon all countries with influence, in particular the co-sponsors of the peace process and the States members of the European Union, to do their utmost to help ensure the success of the peace process, and to bring pressure to bear on Israel to comply with its commitments. While we are convinced of the importance of dialogue and direct negotiations between the parties concerned, the current deadlock in the peace process, and the gravity of the Israeli decision, pose a threat that could bring about the collapse of the peace process, which could in turn have grave consequences for international peace and security.

We therefore call upon the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility and urgently to adopt a firm resolution declaring the Israeli measures to be illegal and urging that country to renounce its policies. My delegation would support such a draft resolution and believes that the text being considered is commensurate with the gravity of the situation and of the Israeli decision. The text is balanced and non-confrontational. We hope that it can be adopted by consensus and that it will consolidate the Middle East peace process.

The President: I thank the representative of Oman for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker is the representative of Mauritania. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and to thank you for chairing today's open debate, which in our view is of the greatest importance. I wish also to thank the other members of the Security Council for agreeing to convene this meeting to discuss the new Israeli plan to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem. This situation shows once again that the United Nations and the Security Council must shoulder their responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security in the sensitive region of the Middle East.

The decision taken by the Israeli cabinet on 21 June 1998 to expand the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem to include adjacent settlements and large tracts of the West Bank would change the characteristics of Jerusalem and alter its status as a city that is sacred to all revealed religions. It would tighten Israel's grip on the city, eradicate its Arab identity and change its demographic composition and its character. This would be a violation not only of international law — including the Hague Rules of 1907 and the fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949 — but also of Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 476 (1980) and 478 (1980). By all of these, Israel's measures in Jerusalem are deemed to be without legal basis and are therefore invalid.

Members no doubt recall the decision adopted by Israel early last year to establish a new settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem. This led to tensions in the occupied Palestinian territories and to the stalling of the Middle East peace process. As the Security Council was unable in the course of two meetings to adopt a resolution on this item, the General Assembly convened its tenth emergency special session on 24 April 1997, and adopted a resolution calling for the immediate and full cessation of the construction in Jebel Abu Ghneim and of all other Israeli settlement activities, as well as of all illegal measures and actions in Jerusalem. In view of Israel's lack of compliance with that resolution, the tenth emergency special session was resumed on three occasions, when the Assembly adopted further resolutions condemning the settlement policies.

Israel's continued defiance of the will of the international community and its continued refusal to implement the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session, added to its new plan to expand the boundaries of Jerusalem, oblige the international community to adopt additional measures to compel Israel to respect international law and United Nations resolutions, in accordance with the Charter.

We call for the adoption of an unambiguous position reflecting the will of the international community, which rejects these policies and the settlements policy. We call for the convening of an international conference of parties to the Geneva Convention on measures to enforce the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session.

The dangerous deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and in the Middle East in general threatens to destroy all efforts to bring about a just and lasting peace. Mauritania supports a comprehensive, just peace in the Middle East based on the outcome of the Madrid Conference, on the principle of land for peace, and on binding international resolutions. We call upon the co-sponsors of the peace process to shoulder their responsibilities and to prevail upon the Israeli Government to respect the agreements it has signed, and to make efforts on all tracks of the peace process. This is imperative both for the region and for the world at large, and we should all work to achieve it.

The President: I thank the representative of Mauritania for the kind words he addressed to me and to the other members of the Security Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation welcomes the convening of this formal meeting of the Security Council, for it provides an opportunity for Member States to express their views on an issue which has historically preoccupied our Organization.

During the past few months, we have witnessed a steady deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories, characterized by an increasing tension that has been aggravated by a stalemate in the peace process. The hope engendered by the international community that the provisions of the peace accords would be scrupulously implemented are in jeopardy, as the Government of Israel persists in its refusal to honour its obligations and commitments. This is incompatible with the norms of international conduct and principles of justice. Consequently, the peace process remains paralysed due to Israel's intensification of its provocative policies and practices. Foremost among those are the establishment of new settlements, the expansion of existing settlements, the building of roads and other auxiliary sites adjacent to and between settlements, the issuance of plans for the creation of new settler units and the revocation of residency rights and confiscation of identity cards of Palestinians living in Jerusalem.

Further compounding the already volatile situation is the recent unilateral and arbitrary decision taken by Israel to expand the city of Jerusalem's administrative and political control beyond its borders, in total violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions pertaining to Jerusalem. This is a calculated and cynical plan to consolidate Israel's claim to the Holy City as a united and eternal capital. It pre-empts the outcome of the permanent status negotiations by changing the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem. Thus, it threatens to further undermine the peace process, with serious repercussions not only for the Middle East but also beyond it.

The Security Council cannot remain indifferent and passive to the series of Israeli onslaughts on the peace process, as we have a vital stake in ensuring that this region will not relapse into a flashpoint of crisis fraught with far-reaching consequences. In this regard, we laud the efforts for peace undertaken by the parties involved and their perseverance in the face of formidable obstacles erected by Israel. The peace process must indeed move forward and be made irreversible.

For this to materialize, Israel must fully observe the agreements already reached and negotiate in good faith on the remaining key issues on the basis of a recognition of the right of the Palestinians to an independent State with al-Quds Al-Sharif as their capital.

My delegation also wishes to reiterate that the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is an essential prerequisite for a durable and comprehensive peace in that region. In the attainment of this objective, the Security Council must ensure the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, in accordance with its resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The Indonesian delegation deems it essential that the Security Council, as the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, send a clear and unambiguous message to Israel to end its illegal policies and actions. What is at stake is not only the future of a nation, but also our shared vision of a Middle East region transformed from an arena of war,

devastation and antagonisms to one of peace, cooperation and shared prosperity.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): With your kind permission, Mr. President, the Malaysian delegation would like to join the Council and others in expressing our deep sorrow and heartfelt condolences over the untimely death of Maître Alioune Blondin Beye and his colleagues, all of whom had dedicated themselves to the cause of international peace and security. Maître Beye's death is a great loss not only to his family and country, but also to the international community.

Malaysia remains concerned over Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Arab territories. Despite international condemnation in the recent past, the Israeli Government remains unrepentant. Its policy on the expansion of settlements and the application of administrative measures, including the classification of Arab residents of Jerusalem as resident aliens or, in certain cases, foreign immigrants, would complete the encirclement of Arab-populated East Jerusalem, cutting it off from the rest of the West Bank.

The latest decision by the Israeli Government on 21 June 1998 to expand the municipal borders of Jerusalem to include the surrounding settlements and extensive areas in the West Bank is another blatant act of provocation and a gross violation of international law. The real goal here is clear to all. The Israeli Government is taking another step in its long-term strategy to strengthen irrevocably its hold on Jerusalem, which it has illegally proclaimed as its united and eternal capital.

My delegation cannot accept this unilateral Israeli decision. We see this decision as illegal, invalid and in contravention of international law. It is but another attempt to reinforce previous Israeli efforts to effectively alter the demographic character of the city of Jerusalem in favour of the Jewish population, thereby predetermining the outcome of the final status negotiations on Jerusalem between the parties concerned.

According to General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which partitioned Palestine into a Jewish State and an Arab State, the city of Jerusalem should remain as *corpus separatum* until its final status is determined through negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The occupation of East Jerusalem in June 1967 and the subsequent annexation of the Old City and surrounding areas by Israel have not been recognized internationally. And let us not forget that, in addition to numerous General Assembly resolutions, the Security Council itself has adopted 16 resolutions regarding the city of Jerusalem and has repeatedly declared that all measures and actions taken by Israel which aim at changing the legal status, demographic composition and character of the city are null and void and without any legal validity whatsoever. Malaysia wishes to reiterate that Jerusalem is of great spiritual importance not only to the Jews, but also to the entire Islamic community throughout the world, as it is to Christians everywhere.

My delegation believes that this latest Israeli decision deserves condemnation. This decision amounts to blatant non- compliance with the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference and all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 252 (1968). This decision is also a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1907. We call on the Israeli Government to immediately rescind the decision. Israel should desist from taking any such unilateral actions which clearly undermine the fragile and stalled peace process. My delegation cannot accept illegal and unilateral measures taken by the Israeli Government which create tension and threaten to further erode the prospects for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel and throughout the Middle East.

By continuously embarking on a provocative course, the Israeli Government, through its unilateral actions, has placed into serious question its own commitment to the peace process. It appears to be intent on reverting to the old ways of taking and keeping what belongs to others, thus further eroding mutual confidence and trust among the parties concerned while delaying the implementation of the peace agreements. My delegation calls upon Israel to join the Palestinians and others concerned to make every effort to revive the peace process. Israel must steadfastly stay the course. While it has the right to be concerned about its security, Israel must also recognize that others similarly have the right to be concerned over their own security. Therefore, we call upon Israel to eschew aggressive behaviour and instead adopt policies designed to bring about long-term prosperity and security both for itself and for its neighbours.

It is now time for Israel to realize that the threats it perceives are a direct consequence of its own policies and actions. Israel cannot flourish at the expense of its neighbours by denying the rightful owners their legitimate rights and lands and by depriving them of these. Security certainly cannot be founded on gross injustice. Israel must have the courage to look beyond the confines of the self-centred and cloistered notion of security and so-called military logic. It must be prepared to build effective partnerships with the Palestinians as well as with all its neighbours and at all levels.

My delegation believes that the Security Council, in carrying out its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should take immediate steps to ensure the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, as well as to promote efforts to encourage the immediate resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. We also urge the co-sponsors of the peace process, which have invested so much effort, to earnestly encourage the Israeli Government to honour its obligations and commitments to the peace agreements, and to continue with those efforts. Malaysia is firmly convinced that security for all countries in the Middle East can only be assured by the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nejad-Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting of the Security Council. We have full confidence in your leadership and in your efforts to steer the Council's deliberations in such a way that the result will reflect the true view of the international community as a whole on the issue at hand.

History is now repeating itself before our eyes and in our lifetime. Little more than 50 years ego, the Zionists began to move into Palestinian lands. Using every imaginable tactic, including confiscation, intimidation, force and terrorism, they occupied and began to change the status of Palestinian land. The same obstinate policy is now at work against the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. There is absolutely no change in their policy or the manner in which they implement it. The Israeli leaders continue to have utter disregard for the agony, sorrow, homelessness and bloodshed that their policies and practices have caused millions of innocent Palestinians for more than five decades, and for the volumes of reprimand and condemnation of their policies and practices by international organizations, particularly by the United Nations.

They robbed the Palestinian people of their land some 50 years ago. Now they are in the process of robbing the Palestinians and the entire Muslim nation of their heritage and what they hold to be divine and sacred. The current Israeli programme envisions strengthening and perpetuating Israel's illegal occupation of the Holy City. This programme includes the creation of an umbrella municipality with administrative power over the Holy City and nearby towns in the occupied territories, as well as over some Jewish settlements in the West Bank. It also includes the speedy construction of roads and other infrastructure in those settlements. This programme is engineered to alter the status of the Holy City by changing its demographic composition. It is a practical move to annex illegally more of the occupied Palestinian territories to the municipality covering the Holy City, which had already been expanded illegally and in violation of the rules of international law and of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In this connection, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his capacity as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, issued a statement on 25 June warning about the repercussions of this Israeli plan, which reads in part:

> "Undoubtedly, this latest act by Israel will further exacerbate the Middle East crisis, for, among other implications, it desecrates the sanctity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, a sanctity which, because of the depth of psychological attachment and spiritual affinity of Muslims to this land of Divine Prophets, has its roots entrenched in their souls."

The international community in general and the Islamic world in particular are deeply concerned about this new Israeli plan, and about the new decision to initiate new settlement activities in Jabal Abu Ghneim. Last year the Security Council was called upon to shoulder its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by putting an end to the construction of Jewish settlements there. The Council met on 5 and 6 March 1997 to consider the situation created by Israeli plans for new settlement activities in Jabal Abu Ghneim.

But regrettably, the draft resolution was subjected to a veto, and the Council was thus prevented from discharging its constitutional responsibility on this crucial issue. The inaction of the Security Council emboldened Israel to defy the wish of the international community, reflected in General Assembly resolution 51/223, which was adopted after the frustration of the case before the Security Council. The matter was put before the Security Council once more, on 21 March 1997, when the exercise of the veto again barred the Security Council from taking a decision, thus giving rise to profound international disappointment.

Lastly, the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly was convened on the basis of General Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950, entitled "Uniting for peace". At the tenth emergency special session, the Assembly adopted four resolutions on illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory in 1997 and 1998. These resolutions, like others, have been totally disregarded by the Israeli regime, as if they did not exist and as if the international community was indifferent to its illegal activities.

Despite such intensive developments and the series of new resolutions on this subject, the announcement of the aforementioned programme by the highest-level Israeli official clearly illustrates Israel's total defiance of the international community and the contempt in which the community's views are held by the Israeli regime. The disdain of the Israeli leaders for the principles of international law and the decisions of the United Nations is no secret to anyone in this Chamber. It is commonly acknowledged, deplored and condemned, but very little, if anything, is done about it.

The present deliberation in the Council of this latest Israeli act of lawlessness, which has spurred international outrage, is another test to determine whether the Security Council will discharge its obligation on behalf of the general membership of the Organization and thus gain the credibility that it constitutionally deserves. The international community expects the Security Council to condemn the Israeli decision of 21 June 1998, demand that it be rescinded and adopt practical measures to counter the organized Israeli steps to alter the historical and demographic status of the Holy City, so as to enable the adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to have unhindered and free access to it.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Colombia. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Mrs. Galindo (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Let me begin by expressing our satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, preside over the Security Council's deliberations this month.

My delegation wishes to stress the importance of this debate on the question of the situation in the occupied Arab territories, to which it attaches special significance. We believe that this debate is particularly relevant in view of recent events associated with the matter under consideration.

The question of Jerusalem has been given constant attention by the international community, and in particular by the Non-Aligned Movement, which has referred to it on many occasions. At the Ministerial Meeting held last year in New Delhi, the Foreign Ministers of States members of the Movement reaffirmed all the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly on Jerusalem as an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territories, and demanded the implementation, in particular, of Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 465 (1980), 478 (1980), 1073 (1996) and General Assembly resolution 51/223. They deemed that the measures aimed at altering the legal, geographical and demographic status of Jerusalem, along with other actions in violation of these resolutions, are null and void.

In the Final Communiqué adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau, held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 18 to 20 May this year, the Foreign Ministers and heads of delegation of the Non-Aligned Movement reiterated their support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to its own homeland and independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. At that time, they once again repeated their demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and the other Arab territories occupied since 1967.

The Ministers and heads of delegation of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement also reaffirmed their position on occupied East Jerusalem, the illegal

settlements and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. In this connection, they demanded strict compliance with the Security Council's resolutions on this matter.

The Ministers of the States members of the Movement reiterated in Cartagena their support for the recommendations contained in the resolutions adopted at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly — resolutions ES-10/2, ES-10/3, ES-10/4 and ES-10/5 — including, *inter alia*, the recommendation to convene a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to discuss how to enforce compliance with the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and to ensure respect by Israel of the Convention by assuming their collective responsibility in accordance with its article 1.

The President: I thank the representative of Colombia for her kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to congratulate the delegation of Kenya on its presidency and express the hope that the representative of Portugal enjoys a well-deserved rest this evening after having so successfully presided over the meetings of this Council for almost a month.

More than three decades after the Security Council's adoption of resolution 242 (1967), Israel continues its illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, in open defiance of the norms of international law and the provisions of the many resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and this Council.

At its most recent regular session and at its tenth emergency special session, the General Assembly considered in detail the deplorable situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Security Council also held several meetings last year on this question, especially on the decision of the Government of Israel to begin building a new settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim, in the south of East Jerusalem. Only the veto of one permanent member prevented the Council from adopting resolutions on this matter on 7 and 21 March 1997.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has reiterated that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, is deteriorating alarmingly, in particular with respect to Israeli settlements and the continued blockades, which harm the Palestinians economically, violate their human rights and provoke increased violence and tension.

Despite the urgent appeals of the United Nations, the settlement policy, instead of disappearing, is being strengthened. More housing is being built in existing settlements, encircling roads are being constructed to link them and the Palestinians of Jerusalem are being denied residency rights.

The Government of Israel, in a further step in the wrong direction, has recently announced a new programme to strengthen and expand its illegal control over Jerusalem. This programme is a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and of the many resolutions adopted by the Security Council and by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session, and is placing the peace process in the Middle East in extreme danger.

Cuba resolutely condemns these and other actions, which are totally devoid of legal validity and represent a clear challenge to the international community. General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the legal status of Jerusalem must be respected.

Holding this open debate is the most basic duty of the Security Council in dealing with the serious developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. The legitimate right of Member States to request the Council to hold open debates so as to deal with questions of international peace and security can in no way be questioned or subject to any conditions.

Furthermore, it is worrying that the Council is unable immediately to adopt a resolution that reflects the overwhelming majority position of United Nations Member States and of members of the Security Council on the issue under discussion, a position that has been reaffirmed once again today.

We wonder how long we will have to continue to witness the double standard adopted by some permanent members of the Security Council, which look after their national political interests, promoting or blocking as they see fit decisions on issues considered by the Council,

thereby exploiting the prerogatives afforded them by the anachronistic right of veto.

The Security Council considers issues that are not within its competence and interferes with the mandate of the General Assembly, while at the same time making inexplicable omissions. Regrettably, the item under discussion is an excellent example of this tendency.

The Security Council has an opportunity to enhance its credibility and demonstrate its adherence to the mandate conferred upon it and to the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations. As the body entrusted with guaranteeing international peace and security, the Council has an obligation to adopt specific measures to put a stop to ongoing actions that violate international law and its own resolutions.

In conclusion, I should like once again to express the resolute commitment of Cuba to the cause of the Palestinian people and the achievement of its inalienable rights.

The President: I thank the representative of Cuba for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Ali Al-Salafi, Chargé d'affaires *ad interim* of the Office of the Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Salafi (League of Arab States) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like at the outset to extend to you, Sir, my congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am also pleased to express my appreciation to Ambassador Mahugu, the Permanent Representative of Kenya, for his efforts in presiding over the Council last month.

The question of Jerusalem is one of the most important issues that was deferred to the final status negotiations by the agreements concluded in Oslo in 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli Government. The decision by the Israeli Government on 21 June to annex to the municipality of Israel several villages west of the city and some of the settlements in the Palestinian territories is designed to tighten the Israeli grip on the Holy City and to separate it from the other Palestinian territories. The objective of this decision is to Judaize Jerusalem, eliminate its Arab character and alter its demographic composition.

The League of Arab States is concerned about these measures adopted by the Israeli Government, which represent a clear violation of the agreements reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli Government. The Israeli plan to expand the Holy City, whether to the east or to the west, represents a clear violation of international legitimacy as established in the 16 resolutions of the Security Council on Jerusalem, especially 252 (1968) and 267 (1969), adopted some 30 years ago.

Security Council resolution 267 (1969), provides, in paragraph 4

> "that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel which purport to alter the status of Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, are invalid and cannot change that status;"

and in paragraph 7

> "that, in the event of a negative response or no response from Israel, the Security Council shall reconvene without delay to consider what further action should be taken in this matter".

In addition, the Security Council, in resolution 476 (1980), decided that, *inter alia*, all measures adopted by Israel to change the character and status of Jerusalem are null and void; and in resolution 478 (1980) that, *inter alia*, the Council refused to recognize the "basic law".

It is high time for the Council to assume its responsibilities for international peace and security in accordance with the Charter and to examine this issue. With regard to the status of Holy Jerusalem, it is clear that Israel is trying to surround Jerusalem with three settlement belts, leading to a decrease in the percentage of Arab citizens, who in East Jerusalem now make up 47 per cent, as opposed to 53 per cent for Jewish citizens. If those figures are combined with figures for the whole of Jerusalem, the result is a three-to-one ratio in favour of Jewish citizens.

As for the possession of Palestinian territory, when the Balfour Declaration was made in 1917, Jews owned 4 per cent of Jerusalem, Arabs 94 per cent and foreigners 2 per cent. Now Jews own 84 per cent of the territory of

Jerusalem, with Arabs owning 14 per cent and foreigners 2 per cent. With regard to the possession of territory in East Jerusalem, Jews now own 74 per cent of the territory and Arabs 26 per cent. Israel has seized most of that territory by force.

That brief comparison of the situation in Jerusalem clarifies the situation. The programme and plan adopted by Israel on 21 June are aimed at expanding the boundaries of Holy Jerusalem to 184 square kilometres — in 1967 it comprised only 7 square kilometres — so as to tighten the grip of the municipal authority of Jerusalem as part of the Israeli plan to Judaize Holy Jerusalem.

Arab States have adopted peace as a strategic option. This was affirmed at the Summit of Arab States in Cairo in 1996 and was based on the desire to make it possible for the area to avoid more wars and more pain and to develop economically, culturally and in a way that would make it civilized.

The Israeli Government, however, continued its practice of settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Holy Jerusalem, in violation of international law, United Nations resolutions and the agreements signed with the Palestinian Authority. The League of Arab States, in view of the stalling of the peace process as a consequence of Israel's decisions and practices which constitute negative indications, calls upon the sponsors of the peace process — the United States and the Russian Federation — and all peace-loving countries to take a stand against the irresponsible Israeli measures.

We call upon the United States to maintain its positive response in the wake of the declaration of that settlement plan in order to maintain the peace and security of the area in the interest of all the countries of the region, and to move the peace process forward towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, because a continuation of the Israeli policies and practices will plunge the area into the cycle of conflict once again.

We would like to refer to the 1991 American letter of assurances wherein the United States does not recognize the annexation of East Jerusalem or the municipal expansion and encourages all parties to avoid unilateral measures that would increase tension, make negotiations more difficult and pre-empt their final outcome.

The city of Holy Jerusalem is important to the Arabs as well as to millions of Muslims and Christians throughout the world. The League of Arab States expresses its appreciation for the clear international consensus which condemns the Israeli programme and plans. It calls on all to support Arab rights in the face of Israeli provocations, which represent a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. This plan aims at seizing the territory by force and eliminating the rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, as well as foreclosing the possibility of any peaceful solution in the region. We therefore called for an urgent meeting of the Security Council so that the Council could assume its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations and on the basis of the resolutions of the Council. The Council should take measures against the plan adopted by the Israeli Cabinet on 21 June. This would send a clear message to Israel to desist from its practices, which represent a contravention of international legitimacy and the position adopted by the international community.

The President: I thank the representative of the League of Arab States for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, Permanent Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Security Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamani (Organization of the Islamic Conference) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting again today to consider how to deal with Israel's non-compliance with internationally binding resolutions and the agreements it has signed, in particular those concerning the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The Israeli Cabinet unanimously adopted, on 21 June 1998, a plan on the expansion of the city of Jerusalem to include vast areas of land and settlements, which will require the confiscation of thousands of acres and the construction of new roads to link the settlements surrounding Jerusalem. Increasing the size of the city from 108 to 600 square kilometres and increasing the population to 1 million persons will effect a demographic change following which the Palestinians will represent a small minority. The Israeli Government has thus unilaterally decided the demographic and geographic future of the city, flouted the wish of the international community and prejudged the status of Jerusalem.

This Israeli position is not new, though the present Israeli Government has only hastened its implementation. Allow me to draw the Council's attention to the following facts.

The Council has reaffirmed in previous resolutions the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to occupied Jerusalem and other Arab territories occupied since 1967. Deeming actions by the occupying Power to change the status of the city as null and void and legally invalid, the Council, in resolutions 162 (1961) and 250 (1968), requested that Israel desist from parading its military power in Jerusalem, and in resolution 251 (1968) it reaffirmed that demand. However, on 24 May 1998, Israel conducted military parades in celebration of the thirty-first anniversary of its occupation of the city.

The Council, through resolution 252 (1968), reaffirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of land by military force. However, Israel has continued to confiscate Arab land in Jerusalem and has brought in 70,000 Jewish families. The process is still ongoing, and what is happening in Jebel Abu Ghneim and Ras Al-Amud is but additional, clear testimony to that. Holy Islamic places were not spared, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in the occupying Power's campaign to close the Holy City to those from the West Bank and Gaza seeking to pray. Jewish groups were allowed to enter the territory of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, to dig tunnels and to excavate below the various historic mosques and buildings, destroying the Ghawanmeh gate in the historic wall of Jerusalem and expanding the square of the Al-Buraq Wall.

Repeated condemnation of these actions by the Israeli authorities has not led to any tangible result, and the agreements reached in the framework of the peace process have not been respected, in spite of appeals from all parts of the world, including from the United States, the European Community, the Vatican and others.

Here I should like to reiterate that the international community considers Jerusalem an occupied city and that the agreements on the transitional self-rule signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization should have prevented any party from taking any actions that would affect the final status of the city.

The list of violations and instances of lack of respect for the Council's resolutions is very lengthy, and I believe it is but another link in a chain of further challenges and violations. The Middle East peace process should remain the highest goal being sought by the international community but that process is suffering from a total collapse on all tracks. It is time, therefore, for the Security Council to take the necessary measures to salvage peace. The Council, which bears responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must take a firm stance that is commensurate with the magnitude and gravity of the violations and challenges by Israel, which is responsible for this grave situation.

Any complacency in deterring Israel would be tantamount to encouraging it to continue in its policy of non-respect for international law and internationally binding resolutions. It would also lead to the end of hopes generated by the Madrid agreements and would return the entire area to the brink of destruction.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Peru in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the representative of Peru to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Guillen (Peru)(*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to express my thanks to you, Mr. President, and to extend my greetings to your predecessor, who presided over this Council with distinction.

There are times when it is necessary to engage in repetition when positions are immovable and when circumstances deteriorate. The Peruvian delegation comes to this meeting to say that there is a situation of considerable deterioration and constant challenge to decisions of the Security Council, of the General Assembly, of other principal organs and of the Organization as a whole.

In the decision adopted in 1947, it was made very clear that the situation of the city of Jerusalem should be that of *corpus separatum*. In accordance with international developments in this matter, we have repeated on many occasions that there should be

international guarantees pertaining to the special status of the city of Jerusalem.

Two proposals submitted to the Security Council were vetoed on 7 March 1997 and on 21 March 1997, despite the will of the majority of the membership of this Council. Because of this, at a special session of the General Assembly at which a resolution was adopted by a vast majority, it was clearly established that the status of Jerusalem was not only a question of, and did not depend solely on, the bilateral agreements between the countries. As was stated in the General Assembly and was expressed in the resolution adopted by a considerable majority, that status should include internationally guaranteed provisions.

The current extension of municipal powers outside the city of Jerusalem is an excessive step that offends the norms and the decisions adopted by these organs of the United Nations of which all States present are members. We believe that such steps will be difficult to rescind in the future if this deliberate policy continues as it has. We believe that it is essential that the Security Council adopt decisions firmly and decisively, and without vetoes, on this matter.

We believe that the status of Jerusalem is not solely a political matter. It is not a bilateral issue, nor is it solely a religious matter. It is a matter of concern to the entire world. It is a matter in which international law and the legal norms of the United Nations are involved.

Several thousand years ago, in the Holy Book, the God of the people of Israel made an appeal that man not act with hostility towards his neighbour, that he not subjugate him, lest he provoke God's wrath. I believe that these words of that God should be present in the conscience of all of us here. I believe it is such an ancient matter that it does not deserve hasty treatment, taboos, hesitation or acts of weakness that detract from the legitimacy of the decisions of this Council.

The President: I thank the representative of Peru for his kind words addressed to me and to my predecessor.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The next meeting of the Security Council to continue consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultations with the members of the Council.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.